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LENINAKAN, AN IMPORTANT TEXTILE AND TRANSPORT CENTER

Ye. A. Trofimovskaya

Leninakan, formerly Aleksandropol', is the second largest city in Armenian SSR, and a very important center of the Transcaucasus textile industry. It is situated on the Shirak Plateau, near the Turkish border, at an elevation of 1,500 meters, and is surrounded by high mountains.

Despite its southern location, Leninakan has a January mean temperature closer to Moscow than to cities like Istanbul and Rome, which are at the same latitude, because of its height and the proximity of the surrounding mountain ranges.

The winter low reaches 30 degrees below zero. Summers are hot with a wide daily range of temperature, i.e., hot days and cold nights. Annual rainfall is about 450 millimeters, mostly in the spring and early summer. Evaporation, which is very great because of the powerful winds, and the porosity of the volcanic rock underlying the Shirak Plateau result in the fact that good harvests can be obtained only by irrigation from even the most fertile soil. The Shirak Canal (built in 1925) irrigates 10,000 hectares of land.

Extensive areas of grain and industrial crops have been developed near Leninakan. In this vicinity sugar beets are being raised in Armenia for the first time.

Multicolored tuff, pumice, marble, granite, diatomite, tripolite, and other building materials as well as mineral dyes (ocher and colcothar) are all found here. Deposits of trachyte, kieselguhr, volcanic sand and ashes, basalt and shale are also located near Leninakan. Small coal fields (Dzhadzhurshkiy and Dzhermanishkiy) are near the city.

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Leninakan is a major transport center. The nature of the location of the mountain ranges and river systems as well as the former trade and military routes have resulted in the fact that Armenia's principal rail and motor roads pass through the border city of Leninakan.

The Tbilisi-Yerevan Trunk Line Railroad first runs south through the Debeda-Chay River valley and then veers west, bypassing the Pambak mountain range and coming out into Leninakan. From Leninakan it bypasses the Aragats volcanic massif and runs along the Araksinskiy graben, entering Yerevan from the southeast. Another rail line runs southward from Leninakan to Kars in Turkey. A branch line connects Leninakan with the big tuff center of Artik and the pumice center of Mekhmetzhdug, both of which have been developed since the revolution.

A network of highways radiates in every direction from Leninakan to all regions of the republic and to neighboring Georgia. They guarantee communications with the agricultural and livestock regions of the upper Western Arpa-Chay and the Loriyskiy Steppe, with the regions producing construction materials and fuel, and with the southern fruit and cotton growing regions.

Leninakan specializes in light industry, especially textiles. Food industries, meat in particular, and the construction-materials industry are also important. A large trained reserve of home craftsmen and artisans furnish workers for the city's industries.

The Leninakan Textile Combine, the largest in the Transcaucasus, operates textile-factory schools primarily to train refugees from Turkish Armenia. Many of these refugees now work in the knitted goods and sewing enterprises of the textile industry.

Various plants have been built in Leninakan to process the raw materials of the surrounding countryside. Alcohol plants have already been built to process the sugar beets now being grown. Sugar refineries are now being built. Meat combines, breweries, and other enterprises of the food industry process the local agricultural products. The construction-materials industry uses local tuff, pumice, tripolite, limestone, etc.

In 1940, the textile combine was unable to operate at full capacity because of power shortages. Now the Shirak Power Plant is constantly increasing its output, and is supplying all the power needed. The Sevano-Zanginak waterfalls are now being utilized by the interconnected hydroelectric stations of Armenia, and by the Leninakan substation.

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